

Hi, Kim.

I just saw the News Journal article about the IEP initiative and wanted to reach out to you about an issue related to this. If you are not the right person to share this with, please direct me elsewhere.

The issue of physical education for students with disabilities has been an issue that I've been following for a while. Students with disabilities don't participate at the same rates as students without disabilities. There are issues of inclusion, teacher preparation, and misinformation about the scope of adapted physical education. It seems to me that the IEP may be a mechanism that could be implemented to ensure equal participation for students with disabilities.

As you know from the meeting last week at the Center for Drug and Health Studies, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is the source of much of our data about youth and health in Delaware. YRBS includes the following two disability questions: 1) Do you have any physical disabilities or long-term health problems? and 2) Do you have any long-term emotional problems or learning disabilities? Youth were defined as having a disability if they positively responded to at least one of these two questions. 17.9 percent of youth in Delaware reported having a disability in 2011. Selected data from YRBS for the year 2011 comparing youth with and without disabilities are below.

In summary, compared to youth without disabilities, youth with disabilities were:

- More likely to be overweight and/or obese
- More likely to use harmful weight loss strategies
- Less likely to participate in physical activity, including physical education class
- More likely to be current smokers
- More likely to report alcohol and drug use
- More likely to be depressed and contemplate suicide
- More likely to report experiencing sexual violence

The disparities in physical activity and healthy weight make the issue of ensuring participation in physical education more compelling.

The Center for Disabilities Studies at UD has been involved in a strategic planning process with DHSS to Achieve Health Equity for Delawareans with Disabilities. **One of the strategies for improving participation of students with disabilities in physical education suggested has been to add physical education as a required element of IEP plans.** While the strategic plan is still in draft form, it seems like the timing might be right to raise this issue and see if we can integrate physical education into the IEP discussion.

Here are two links that offer some background on this issue.

GAO Report: STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES: More Information and Guidance Could Improve Opportunities in Physical Education and Athletics

<http://www.gao.gov/assets/310/305770.pdf>

Inclusive Fitness Coalition

<http://incfit.org/node/711>

If you have any suggestions for how to pursue this, or want to discuss this further, I would appreciate it. Thanks.

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